



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, DC 20554

Michael J. Copps
Commissioner

January 31, 2003

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Conyers:

Thank you for contacting me about the Commission's upcoming decisions on its competition rules. I understand and share your concern that we not take steps that would undermine the competition that Congress sought to create in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of the decisions that are going to be made in the coming weeks. We will decide whether to keep, modify, or scrap many of our competition rules. There is the potential here to remake our entire communications landscape, for better or for worse, for many years to come. The stakes are enormous.

The goal of fostering competition is laid out very clearly in the Telecommunications Act. We should not use the current economic situation as an excuse to back away from competition. It is during recessions and tough economic times when we hear the pleas for less competition and increased consolidation. But re-monopolization is not the cure for telecom's problems. Instead we should vigorously pursue Congress's goal of competition and consumer choice. Competition has the power to give choices to consumers – choices of services, choices of providers, choices of technology, and choices of sources of content. When consumers have more options, they reap the benefits -- better services, greater innovation, higher technology, and more robust discourse.

As Congress foresaw, we are beginning to see competition both *within* delivery platforms and *among* delivery platforms, with increasing convergence of industries, of services, and of markets. This competition is especially important in broadband. Today, having access to advanced communications – broadband – is every bit as important as access to basic telephone services was in the past. Providing meaningful access to advanced telecommunications for all our citizens may well spell the difference between continued stagnation and economic revitalization. Broadband is already becoming key to our nation's systems of education and commerce and jobs and entertainment and, therefore, key to America's future. Those who get access will win. Those who don't will

cc: JC

lose. I want to make sure we all get there.

As we move ahead with these efforts, I would hope that we would work closely and cooperatively with our colleagues at the State Commissions. The Telecom Act is very much a federal activity, using the term "federal" in its historical context of the state and national governments working together. The Commission and the State Commissions have a joint responsibility under the Act to ensure that conditions are right for competition to flourish. The path to success is not through preemption of the role of the States.

I approach these proceedings hopeful that the Commission will show proper restraint and will not presume to undercut the statutory competitive framework. Instead, the Commission should use these proceedings to understand the marketplace better in our role as policy implementers and not policy makers. And we must be at pains not to let a zeal to deregulate before meaningful competition develops cripple the very competition that Congress sought to engender.

I look forward to working with each of you on these issues and also on the full range of issues at the FCC as we build a better future for all our citizens through communications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Michael J. Copps". The signature is stylized, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Copps" clearly legible, and a middle initial "J." in between.

Michael J. Copps